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SUBJECT: CHOD RESIGNS IN COMMANDO-BOOK SCANDAL

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Classified By: (U) Ambassador Laurie S. Fulton; reason 1.4 (b, d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Denmark's Chief of Defense Command (CHOD) Admiral Tim Sloth Joergensen resigned October 4 as a result of a scandal over an Arabic translation of a controversial book about Danish commandos that was published over MOD objections. It has been revealed that an officer on his staff produced the computerized translation, and another leaked it to the press. The investigation to date suggests that neither Joergensen nor Defense Minister Soeren Gade was aware of the Danish defense establishment's connection to the translation, but Gade -- at least unwittingly -- misled Parliament about the origin of the translation. The Prime Minister's national security advisor confided to the Ambassador October 5 his personal view that this is a major crisis for the Government and indicated that the likelihood of other resignations was "50-50." END SUMMARY.

(U) FROM CONTROVERSY...

2. (SBU) On September 16, the Danish newspaper Politiken published in full the book "Commando - At War With Special Forces" written by former Danish Special Forces soldier Thomas Rath sack. It did so knowing that the Ministry of Defense (MOD) had filed for an injunction against publication on national-security grounds, and that a court hearing was scheduled for the following day. The concern was that some details about commando warfare could help the enemy and endanger Danish and allied troops in Afghanistan. The following week, an Arabic translation of the book was found on the internet; it was of very poor quality, almost certainly the product of a machine-translation program. DefMin Soeren Gade told members of Parliament that the translation had been found on the internet, but not that it had been put there by his own department. He stated publicly that the contents of the book were "obviously of interest to the opposition."

(U) ...TO CRISIS

3. (SBU) On October 1, the tabloid Ekstra Bladet claimed that the translation had been concocted by the chief of the IT section of MOD, Captain (Navy) Jesper Britze, allegedly at the instigation of Gade's chief press spokesman Jakob Winther, apparently in order to enable the minister to show that the book was a threat to national security. Gade called an urgent press conference at which he expressed shock and dismay that anyone within his ministry might have done anything of the sort. He offered to resign if Parliament had

lost confidence in him. On October 2, Lieutenant Colonel Lars Sonderskov, Chief of Communications at Defense Command, admitted he had sent the translation to the Danish newspaper Berlingske Tidende.

¶4. (C) Initially, Gade retained the support of the parties in Government (his own Liberals and the Conservatives) and of the Danish People's Party which supports the Government from outside the coalition. The largest opposition group, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), declared October 1 that it was "satisfied for now" with his explanation, but quickly changed its mind and called for Gade's resignation. Its ally the Socialist People's Party was less aggressive, insisting merely that nobody is immune from accountability. CHOD Joergensen initially rebuffed suggestions that he should resign over the actions of his subordinate, but after meeting with Gade October 3, he announced his resignation October 4. Gade then publicly expressed his regret and respect for the CHOD's decision. On October 5, Gade reported on MOD's handling of the affair to the parties to the Defense Agreement (i.e. the ruling coalition, Danish People's Party, SDP, Socialist People's Party, and Social Liberals). Accompanying him was Permanent Under Secretary of Defense Lars Findsen, a career civil servant, who has been faulted for failing to tell Gade promptly that the translation was machine-produced and of poor quality. The meeting evidently went well: afterwards, the opposition parties said they would await the outcome of two separate investigations that MOD auditors have begun, before deciding whether to call for an independent investigation. The SDP did not withdraw its call for Gade's resignation, however.

¶5. (C/NF) The Prime Minister's national security advisor, Thomas Ahrenkiel, who is also a civil servant, confided to the Ambassador earlier October 5 his personal view that this is a major crisis for the Government; he indicated that the likelihood of additional resignations is "50-50." Resignation of a minister would be a big loss for PM Lars Loekke Rasmussen, Ahrenkiel commented; those in charge must retain trust and confidence, especially while Danish soldiers are fighting in Afghanistan.

¶6. (C) The timing of this scandal is especially awkward: the formal opening of Parliament is scheduled for October 6, at which the PM is due to give his first State of the Nation speech. He will want the focus to be on his legislative agenda, not on these actions in which the political leadership appears to have had no role.
FULTON